

WEDDING  
T. LINCOLN - N. HANKS  
L.L. 668

DRAWER 1A CHILDREN OF JOSEPH HANKS OR

71.2009.085.05539



# Hanks Family

Nancy Hanks

Wedding

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



## RUMORS REGARDING LINCOLN FAMILY'S ORIGIN DISPROVED

Kentuckians Dig Up Marriage License Issued to Emancipator's Parents.

1934

SPRINGFIELD, KY., Feb. 12.—(Special)—Down here in the original Lincoln country, where Abraham Lincoln's grandfather settled on a wilderness farm and where the emancipator's father and mother were married, there was to have been a Lincoln's birthday celebration today in form of a dedication of a Lincoln Homestead Memorial Park.

But the grounds, which include the site of the original Lincoln cabin and a replica of it on Lincoln's Run, are not yet ready, and the dedication must take place a little later. Instead, on this Lincoln natal day, the people of this home county, where Lincoln received only one presidential vote, will give a banquet tonight at the Presbyterian Church here, at which white-haired sons of former slaves will sing.

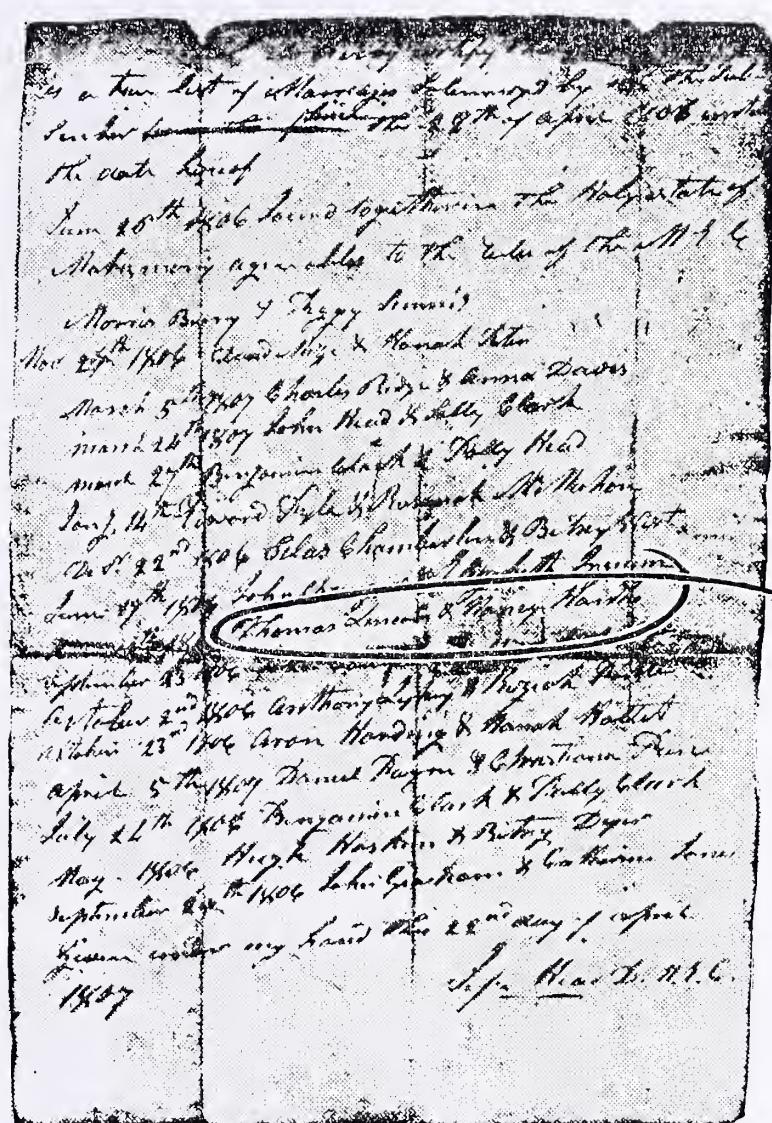
Only a few miles out of this city, county seat of Washington County, Abraham Lincoln, Sr., grandfather of the President, and Abraham, Sr.'s brother-in-law, Richard Berry, Sr., arrived one day in 1782 after a long and perilous journey from Virginia, and took up land.

### Had Large Family.

Berry built his log house first. The Lincoln family consisted of his wife, Bersheba, five sons and two daughters. The youngest of these sons was Thomas Lincoln, father of the President, and a child of Abraham, Sr.'s, first wife, who had died before he left Virginia. Mordecai was the oldest of this flock.

Abraham, Sr., had been a man of some standing back in the Old Dominion, and would in all likelihood have done as well in Kentucky if the Indians had not picked him off before he had obtained a fair start. All of the Lincoln biographies relate how Abraham, Sr., was shot one day near his cabin, and how the widow and her children later carried on alone, but it is only recently that the spot where the killing occurred has been rather definitely located, through the efforts of the Rev. Or-

## Exploding Lincoln Myth



This photograph of the minister's "return" to the county clerk of the marriage of Abraham Lincoln's parents, Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, found in the records of the county clerk of Washington County, Kentucky, after rumors that they never legally married. The preacher was the Rev. Jesse Head, who was a cabinet maker and Methodist minister combined. The names of the contracting parties in the marriage are encircled. The Lincoln "marriage bond," required under the old Kentucky law, was also found among the archives at the county seat, Springfield, about sixty miles from Louisville. Under it Lincoln's father's friends had to bind themselves as security that there was no legal encumbrance to his marriage.

ville W. Baylor, head of the county historical society, and others.

So much for Grandfather Lincoln. What Washington County is chiefly concerned with in this effort to bring this original Lincoln county to national notice is the bearing of these events on Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, father and mother of the emancipator, who were married in this same region, beyond doubt in the home of Francis Berry, a son of Richard, the pioneer.

#### Old Stories Disproved.

President Lincoln lived and died in the belief that his father and Nancy Hanks were never legally married. This was one of the stories circulated in Lincoln's first presidential campaign. There were other stories whispered about Lincoln's mother. Lincoln supposed he had been born in Hardin County and wrote there for his birth record. He was informed no record existed.

It was not until a few years ago that Washington County residents dug into the records of their own county and discovered the Lincoln marriage bond and the minister's return. Then the real facts about Lincoln's mother came to light.

It was proved beyond dispute that Nancy Hanks had been well brought up in the family of her cousins, the Berrys, as their own daughter. Instead of being the illiterate person early Lincoln biographers had made her out to be, she had what was a fair education for those times, was mentally alert, and was popular among the beaux and belles of this pioneer community.

The early stories that Lincoln's father could not read or write and was a roving ne'er-do-well have been completely disproved by finding his signature to documents in the county records here and other evidence. Even the pulpit of the preacher who married Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, the Rev. Jesse Head, a cabinet maker and Methodist preacher "on the side," has been found and will be added to the county museum now being established.

#### Married in 1806.

That Thomas Lincoln enjoyed a good reputation and credit is proved by an old account book recently come to light in Elizabethtown, near here, where the emancipator's father bought the cloth for his wedding outfit. The wedding took place on June 12, 1806. At the little store of Bleakley & Montgomery, whose accounts have been preserved, Thomas Lincoln had a credit for merchandise running up to \$200, a large sum for those days, and the book shows he paid his bills.

Here is what he bought between May 16 and 22 for his wedding clothes, the charges being made in English money which was the only currency in that region at that time:

Two yards of cloth, 1 $\frac{3}{4}$  yards of jeans, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  yards of brown Holland (cloth),  $\frac{1}{4}$  yard scarlet cloth, 3 sticks of twist, 3 skeins of twist, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  yards cassimere, 2 yards tape, 1 dozen buttons, 9 dozen buttons, 2 yards brown Holland, 6 skeins thread, 3 yards coating, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  yards brown Holland, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  yards brown flannel, 1 2-3 dozen buttons, 2 skeins of silk, 1 stick of twist, 2 skeins of thread, amounting in all to more than \$100.

And the entry shows he paid cash. Undoubtedly this material was turned over to a tailor. It was such

an important wedding that court adjourned the day before to permit the justices to attend.

#### Brother Over-Indulged.

What gave the impression that Thomas Lincoln was a rover was the fact that the elder brother, Mordecai, inherited all of the property under the old Kentucky law of primogeniture, after the Indians killed his father. Mordecai's own history is not so good, as shown by what would now be called police court records. There is fairly good evidence that he cheated his relatives and got into contact with the law by too much indulgence in pioneer strong drink.

On the other hand Thomas, father of the President, left without property to make his own way, undertook surveying and cabinet making, and various tracts of land that he obtained as pay for his services kept him away from home a good share of the time.

Many of the older Lincoln biographies will now have to be revised in the light of this new information. Even Woodrow Wilson's characterization of Nancy Hanks as "poor white trash" has been utterly disproved by the official records.

There are rival claims down here to some of these original sites. Jefferson County asserted for a time it was the original "Lincoln" country, where Lincoln's parents were wedded, but Washington County official records have disproved that. There is more than a suspicion that the Lincoln memorial "marriage temple" in another Kentucky county is not so authentic as it has been made out to be, according to Lincoln data recently unearthed.

#### Who Was Nancy Hanks.

Who was Nancy Hanks? The origin of Lincoln's mother has still to be solved. At one time it was believed that Lucy Shipley Hanks, widow of James Hanks, and her younger daughter, Nancy, came to Kentucky from North Carolina along with the McCords, Mitchells and other pioneers who risked slaughter by the Indians back in 1790. The Rev. Mr. Baylor's investigations indicate that Nancy Hanks arrived earlier.

Possibly she came with the Lincolns and Berrys. Brothers of Lucy Shipley Hanks already were in Kentucky. Nancy Hanks' early ancestry is still to be traced in Virginia or North Carolina, where the family originated. But enough is now known about her and her husband, Thomas Lincoln, to make sure that the emancipator inherited good blood and a sterling character from both sides.

His forbears rank well up in the social scale with other old families of this region, including the Berrys, the Litsseys, Mitchells and McCords, many of whose descendants still live here, a few of whom have settled in St. Louis, and not a few of whom have occupied prominent places in their state and nation.

This Lincoln Homestead Memorial Park will save all this history for the nation. The two springs that furnished water for the Lincoln household are being walled in, there will be a typical Kentucky log pioneer house such as the President's father and mother lived in, with cattle shed, meat house, tool shed and garden; a museum and historical relics, which are still plentiful among the

old Washington County families. Ultimately the Lincoln Highway will be connected with this park, and it is expected the state will take it over.

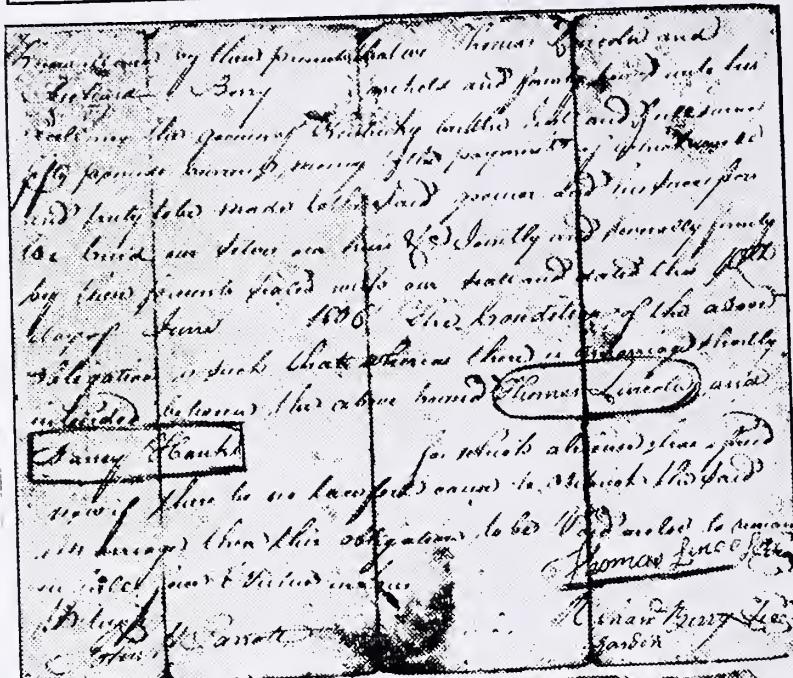
Washington County, early home of Nancy Hanks and Thomas Lincoln, is doing its part to make the emancipator real to coming generations.

Know all men by these presents that we Thomas Lincoln and  
Richard Berry arch'd and firmly bound unto his  
Excellency the Governor of Kentucky for the sum and full sum of  
fifty pounds current money of the payment of which we do  
and truly to be made to the said governor and his successor  
we bind our selves our heirs & jointly and severally firmly  
by these presents sealed with our seals and dated this 10<sup>th</sup>  
day of June 1806 The condition of the above  
Obligation is such that whereas this is amarrying shortly  
intended between the above bound Thomas Lincoln and  
Nancy Banks for which averse, has died  
now if there be no lawful cause to obstruct the said  
Marriage then this obligation to be void or else to remain  
in full force & virtue in law

Bethany M. Abbott  
John H. Abbott

Thomas Lincoln  
Richard Berry Seal  
garden

FEB 1934



Do hereby certify that the following  
is a true list of Marriages solemnized by me the Sub-  
scribed Person from the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1806 until  
the date hereof.

Jan 20<sup>th</sup> 1806 joined together in the Holy estate of  
Matrimony agreeably to the rules of the A. S. C.  
Morris Berry & Peggy Simms  
Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 1806 David Atch & Hannah Atch  
March 5<sup>th</sup> 1807 Charles Ridd & Anna Davis  
March 24<sup>th</sup> 1807 John Head & Sally Clark  
March 27<sup>th</sup> Benjamin Clark & Sally Head  
April 14<sup>th</sup> 1807 David Style & Rosannah McMurtry  
May 1<sup>st</sup> 1807 David Style & Rosannah McMurtry  
May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1806 Silas Chamberlain & Betty West  
June 9<sup>th</sup> 1806 John Springer & Judith Lyman  
Thomas Lincoln & Nancy Hanks

September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1806 John Head & Anna Davis  
Oct 10<sup>th</sup> 1806 Anthony Loring & Deborah Smith  
Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1806 Aaron Handing & Sarah Webster  
April 5<sup>th</sup> 1807 Daniel Rayon & Christiana Price  
July 21<sup>st</sup> 1807 Benjamin Clark & Sally Clark  
May 14<sup>th</sup> 1807 Hugh Martin & Betty Dyer  
September 20<sup>th</sup> 1806 John Greenham & Catherine Jones  
Given under my hand the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of April  
1807

S. H. Head, M. E. C.  
Methodist Episcopal  
Church  
Jesse Head  
Pastor

## TOSTATS PROVE LINCOLN'S RENTS WERE WED JUNE 12, 1806

age Certificate, Bond and Methodist Pastor's Records Are Found in Kentucky.

Photostatic copies of documents establishing June 12, 1806, as the exact date of the marriage of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, parents of President Lincoln, have just been placed on exhibition in the Lincoln Museum, at 516 Tenth street, it was disclosed today.

The photostatic records are those preserved in the archives of Washington County, Ky., and were made available by Joseph Polin, prosecuting attorney of that county. The records are regarded with particular interest in view of the canard concerning the doubt that Lincoln's parents ever were married, and because of the Civil War President's own inability to locate the original documents.

The document copies now on view here include records of the fact that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks obtained a marriage certificate and bond as required then on June 10, 1806. The photostats include the personal records of Rev. Jesse Head, pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church, covering the period from April 6, 1806, to April 22, 1807, and show clearly that Lincoln's parents were married by him on June 12, 1806.

Typed copies of these records have been printed in Dr. Barton's book, "The Paternity of Abraham Lincoln," but the copies here now are the first camera copies of the actual records as they are preserved in Washington County.

Upper: A photostat copy of the true and original marriage license of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, issued in and by Washington County, Ky., on June 10, 1806. The marriage ceremony was performed two days later, June 12, by Rev. Jesse Head of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Lower: A photostat copy of the record kept by Rev. Mr. Head of all marriages performed by him from April 28, 1806, to April 22, 1807, showing that Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks were joined in matrimony on June 12, 1806.

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 688

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

June 15, 1942

## KENTUCKY'S MOST IMPORTANT WEDDING

Universally noted for her beautiful women, it follows that Kentucky has been the scene of many important weddings where prominent, influential and wealthy men have been united in marriage to the belles of the Blue Grass state. No nuptial vows have thus far been performed in Kentucky which have proven to be of more importance than the rites which pronounced Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks, husband and wife.

This year marks the sesquicentennial of Kentucky's statehood which has resulted in many celebrations in commemoration of the anniversary. Some of the counties formed in 1792, the same year the state was established, are enjoying a double anniversary. Among these smaller units is Washington County where the marriage of Lincoln's parents took place. To further emphasize the anniversary feature the celebration in Washington County was held on June 12, the day on which the wedding of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks occurred. The editor of *Lincoln Lore* was one of the speakers on this occasion.

It is doubtful if the incidents associated with any weddings have been and still are the subject of more controversy. It is to be regretted that due to the wide significance and international importance of this event that it could not have been left in the simplicity of its original setting. It was first advocated that the wedding never took place and that the parents of Lincoln lived as common-law husband and wife. With this objection removed by the discovery of the marriage papers, the bride was then pictured as a waif, the illegitimate child of an unworthy woman. This tradition still survives regardless of the preponderance of documentary evidence against it.

The groom who seldom figures very much in the recitals of a wedding episode has come in for his full share of attention and until recent documentary discoveries about his economic status he was given the roll of a roving vagabond of the "poor white trash," who was willing to go through the wedding ceremony for a financial consideration.

Richard Berry, who signed the marriage bond as guardian of the bride, was called just a by-stander in the court house where Thomas Lincoln secured the papers. Even the Reverend Jesse Head who performed the ceremony was looked upon as a fictitious character by some.

The identity of the home in which Thomas and Nancy were married is still in dispute and it is claimed they lived there for a space of two years and a half, leaving the implication that Thomas Lincoln was not able to provide a home for the woman he had married.

The limited space in an issue of *Lincoln Lore* for discussing such questions as those raised here have naturally been assigned to the Foundation's other publication, *The Lincoln Kinsman*. However, a brief summary of court records which deal directly or indirectly with the Lincoln-Hanks wedding ceremonies is made available here.

### The Groom's Wedding Outfit

Thomas Lincoln purchased on May 3, 1806 at Bleakley-Montgomery's store in Elizabethtown, Kentucky for three shillings "one-half calf skin" presumably for his wedding boots. On May 16 at the same store he purchased a large bill of goods including cloth for his wedding suit. Four days later another lot of merchandise was purchased containing 3 yards of coating, brown Holland cloth, red flannel, buttons, skeins of silk, etc.

### Decorating the Bridal Carriage

Having taken care of his own wedding outfit he purchased of the Elizabethtown merchants a "tipt bridle" for his horse which cost him "13 shillings 6 pence," over three dollars. Certainly he owned a good saddle and on the same horse, behind the groom, the bride would find a seat.

### Cash for Wedding Expenses

The prospective bridegroom on May 22, three weeks before the wedding, drew from his surplus credit at Bleakley-Montgomery store the sum of "\$112.70."

### Guests and Attendants

Previous to 1806 four of the Widow Lincoln's children had married into Washington County families and the wedding of her youngest son Thomas, would be of general interest to a large number of the groom's kinsfolk. The senior Berry's niece, the bride Nancy Hanks, had a great many relatives in the surrounding country. There were also Shipley, Mitchell and McCord cousins, and some small half-brothers and half-sisters of the bride in the adjacent Doctor's Fork community. Nancy's cousin and girlhood companion, Sarah Shipley Mitchell, who was bridesmaid, would be the special guest.

### Bride's Cousin A Bondsman

Thomas Lincoln was in Washington County at least two days before the wedding as on June 10, 1806 he signed the following bond with Richard Berry as bondsman.

"Know all men by these presents that we Thomas Lincoln and Richard Berry are held and firmly bound . . . that whereas there is a marriage shortly intended between the above bound Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks for which a license has been issued . . .

"Witness  
"John H. Parrott.  
Thomas Lincoln  
Richard Berry  
"Garden."

### The Presiding Minister

The authority of Rev. Jesse Head to conduct a marriage ceremony for Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks and pronounce them husband and wife is found in this Washington County Court Order for February 7, 1803: "On the motion of Jesse Head, a minister of the gospel of the Methodist Episcopal Church who made the oath, a testimonial is granted him to solemnize the rites of marriage on his giving bond . . ."

### The Wedding Day

Traditions still extant claim that the Judge and lawyers of the court, then in session at Springfield, attended the Lincoln-Hanks marriage ceremony and wedding festivities. The editor of *Lincoln Lore* discovered in the Washington Circuit Court Order Book for June, 1806, that the court convened on Monday, June 9, Tuesday, June 10, Wednesday, June 11, although on Thursday, June 12, the wedding day, it was not in session, but again resumed business on Friday, June 13. Richard Berry, guardian of the bride, was serving on a jury in the court. Mordecai Lincoln, oldest brother of the groom, had a lawsuit being tried in which he was the defendant, and Jesse Head, as a justice of the peace, also had business in court. Kentucky's most important wedding was even then of sufficient significance to cause the adjournment of the court for the day of the wedding, June 12, 1806.

### The Marriage Consummated

The marriage returns of Rev. Jesse Head, among others noted, contain this entry: "Washington County—I do certify that the following is a true list of marriages solemnized by me the subscriber. . . . Joined in the Holy Estate of Matrimony agreeable to the rules of M. E. C. . . .  
"June 12, 1806 Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks.  
"Jesse Head, P. M. E. C."

### "At Home" In Elizabethtown

Two days after the wedding, on June 14, 1806, Thomas Lincoln purchased at the Bleakley-Montgomery store, in the village of Elizabethtown where he had taken his wife, "a half set of knives and forks" at five shillings and "three skeins of silk" for which he paid two shillings and three pence. The parents of Abraham Lincoln were then "at home" to their many friends and kinsmen.

BARRY BINGHAM, President

MARK F. ETHRIDGE, Publisher

LISLE BAKER, JR., Vice Pres & Gen. Mgr.

# The Courier-Journal THE LOUISVILLE TIMES

LOUISVILLE 2, KY.

January 14, 1952

Dear Dr. Warren,--

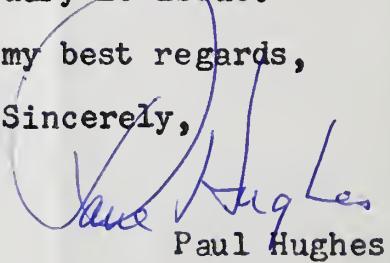
I am sending you herewith a photo of a document that appears to attest Thomas Lincoln's marriage to Nancy Hanks on June 12, 1806. I would like to know your expert opinion of its genuineness and whether you have ever heard of its being printed.

The paper, quite fragile, turned up several years ago when Mr. Claude Steinau, a Louisville collector, bought a trunkful of old papers out of an attic, perhaps here in Louisville. He said he has had it so long that he doesn't know for certain when he obtained it. Indeed, he claims, he didn't even know it was among the papers in the trunk until sort of recently.

If the paper seems new and true, in a newspaper sense, we'd like to use it as a ~~xxxxx~~ feature in our February 10 issue.

Many thanks in advance for your help, and my best regards,

Sincerely,



Paul Hughes

January 18, 1952

Mr. Paul Hughes  
The Courier-Journal  
The Louisville Times  
Louisville, 2, Kentucky

My dear Mr. Hughes:

The copy of Jesse Head's Marriage Return has often been used in Lincoln books. As early as 1896 Ida Tarbell in her Life of Abraham used it and it has been seen many times since.

Whether the copy Mr. Steinau owns is an original or a copy I could not tell without seeing it as it is a slightly different facsimile.

Very truly yours,

LAW:mm

Director

April 1, 1952

Mr. Paul Hughes  
The Courier-Journal  
The Louisville Times  
Louisville 2, Kentucky

Dear Mr. Hughes:

I am sorry that I have been so long in answering your letter of January 14 but I have been out of the city more than two months and I have just found an opportunity to comment on the attached certificate of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks as signed by Jessie Head.

I think it is quite evident that what you have is a tracing from the original and not the original itself. Henry Whitney Cleveland of Louisville once made a tracing of the original which appears in Ida Tarbell's book, *The Early Life of Abraham Lincoln*. I believe Barton also used a photograph of the original slightly different from the Tarbell manuscript which is found in Barton's *Life of Lincoln* on page 20. I regret indeed that I cannot give you a more favorable reply.

Very truly yours,

LAW:PE  
L.A.Warren

Director



MUIR

P. O. Box 159  
Bardstown, Ky. 40004  
July 20, 1981

Mrs. Mary Jane Hubler  
The Louis A. Warren  
Lincoln Library and Museum  
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801

Dear Mrs. Hubler:

When Mrs. Muir and I arrived in Bardstown on Saturday afternoon from the Frankfort, Indiana, home of our daughter, we stopped at the postoffice, and I was delighted to get your letter and copies of "Lincoln Lore" from May, 1979, to November, 1980, inclusive. That gives me a complete file from July, 1956, to November, 1980.

As I think I stated in my letter to Gerald, I am descended from James Graham who was one of the forty "Long Hunters" led into Kentucky by Col. James Knox in 1770. He hunted with Daniel Boone and after his marriage at Fort Pitt to Mary Worthington they came with the small George Rogers Clark party to settle at Corn Island (Louisville) on May 27, 1778.

Dr. Christopher C. Graham, son of James and Mary, saw Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks married; was their family doctor and gave Abram his first book. Mother was born in 1881, and she sat on Uncle Christopher's lap as had young Lincoln years before. Dr. Graham was born in 1784 and died in 1885; Mother died in 1973.

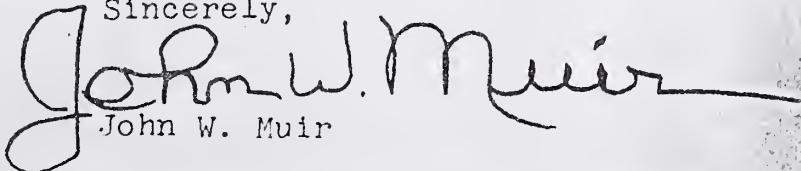
Margaret, my wife, and daughter Ann worked on family lines at the library in Fort Wayne on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning. Mother went into the D. A. R. on Lt. Peter Brown, aide-de-camp to Washington, and his father-in-law, Col. Andrew Beall. On the Beall family line we have Ninian Beall, Ninian Beall Edwards and Lincoln's Ninian Wirt Edwards.

Margaret, Mrs. Muir, worked at the Springfield, Ky., courthouse today and perhaps has additional information on her Berry and Shipley lines.

True--some of the charges at the Holiday Inn in Fort Wayne are a little high, but it is a good place to stay.

Thanks for the courtesies shown me when I was there and at other times.

Sincerely,

  
John W. Muir

**DEATH OF DR. C. C. GRAHAM.**

**He Passes Away Peacefully, Full of Years  
and Honors.**

LOUISVILLE, Ky., Feb. 3.—Dr. Christopher C. Graham, the centenarian, died this evening after a short illness.

He was 100 years old last October, (8), and celebrated the event with a grand banquet. He was born in the old fort near Danville, Ky., and was an associate of Daniel Boone. Dr. Graham was the father of Mrs. Senator Jos. Blackburn and Mrs. ex-Gov. Bramlette. He was an intimate friend of Mr. and Mrs. President Lincoln. Two hours before he died he dictated a letter to Secretary of War Robert Lincoln, but the contents are unknown. Dr. Graham was hale and hearty until a short time ago, when he made a tour of the state, exhausting himself in so doing. He will be buried at Danville on Thursday.

Dr. Graham's sister died recently at the age of 96.



